



PSIR 336 - Formation of Modern Turkey

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Nationalism Effect in Hrant Dink Assassination

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to give information about Hrant Dink, who was assassinated on January 19, 2007. In the study, the impact of nationalism on murder will be explained in detail. The evidence that emerged after the assassination has shown that the assassination is actually known to the police officers. With the murder, the problem of minority rights in the country came up again. Turkey, which is already a problematic country regarding minority rights, has been the target of international reactions as a result of this assassination.

Key Words: Hrant Dink, Minority rights, Armenian affair, AGOS.

Introduction

Hrant Dink is a Turkish of Armenian origin born in Malatya in 1954. He is the editor-in-chief of the weekly Agos Newspaper, published in Turkish and Armenian. Hrant Dink is a journalist who looks at events from a historical perspective, focuses on scientific methods, and can handle the Turkish-Armenian issue with common sense. This journalist, who favors peace and brotherhood, was shot and killed at noon on one of the busiest streets of Istanbul with the effect of rising nationalist rhetoric. The evidence that emerged after the murder showed that the assassination was not intentionally prevented. After the murder suspect was caught, he posed heroically in front of the Turkish flag. Both the murder and this photograph were within the knowledge of the police. Thousands of people chanted slogans "We are all Armenians" at the funeral held 4 days after the assassination. Hrant Dink, who worked for peace and brotherhood while he was alive, achieved this brotherhood with his death.

Literature Review

Hrant Dink was born on September 15, 1954, in Malatya. He lived as an Armenian intellectual in Turkey. He was shot and killed on the sidewalk in front of the Agos Newspaper, on which he continued his struggle, on January 19, 2007. Before firing the pistols, it is necessary to undo the trigger space to shoot more accurately. With the index finger, the trigger is gently pulled, space is removed and all that remains is to press the trigger. The trigger of the gun that killed Dink that day was pulled by Ogün Samast, created by fanatic nationalist rhetoric. Hrant Dink was both editor-in-chief and author of Agos Newspaper. He has written on minority issues. He signed a mission that was appreciated and criticized with Agos, which has a democratic structure. He played a role in the recognition of the Armenian community. Even though it was published for Armenians, Agos, who was careful not to be the voice of the community, even fell apart with his own community.¹ Signed news on the agenda, became a powerful minority newspaper. Over time, his opinion on each subject has become a curious and controversial publication. Agos Newspaper has become a curious and controversial publication on every issue over time. Agos drew attention with his perspective on the Armenian genocide and his struggle against prejudices on political issues.

The first reason that made Hrant Dink a target was Sabiha Gökçen news. Dink claimed that Sabiha Gökçen was one of the Armenian children who survived the 1915

¹ Tuba Çandar, Hrant, İstanbul, 2010, p.404.

massacre.² Immediately after this news, the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff made a hard statement on February 22, 2004, and the environment was stretched unexpectedly. In the statement of the General Staff, it was said that the allegation that Sabiha Gökçen was an Armenian threatened social peace. Hrant Dink became a target after the incident was published in Hürriyet Newspaper. After that, Hrant Dink was called to the Governorship of Istanbul on February 24, 2004, where he was warned by the National Intelligence Service officials. Intelligence officer told Dink that his article about Sabiha Gökçen may cause social anger.³ A day later, on February 26, 2004, an unidentified group gathered in front of the newspaper Agos and shouted slogans. Since then, Hrant Dink was regularly subjected to threats and swearing.

Before the discussions of Hrant Dink's Sabiha Gökçen news ended, the process in which he was judged under Article 301, which would be declared as Turkish enemy, had begun. On 13 February 2004, Hrant Dink wrote a series of articles titled 'On the Armenian Identity'.⁴ This article made an unexpected effect. On February 26, 2004, a group of idealists led by Levent Temiz, Head of Istanbul Grey Wolves, gathered in front of Agos Newspaper and held a demonstration. Levent Temiz, the leader of the group, made a speech here; Hrant Dink is the target of all our anger and hatred from now on, he said. After this article, Hrant Dink was sued for insulting Turkishness.⁵ The interesting thing is that although the lawsuit filed due to this article was written before the Sabiha Gökçen allegations appeared, it was opened approximately 3 months later, after the news made a voice in the national media.

Hrant Dink wrote an article on January 12, 2007, a week before his death, with the title "Why I was Selected as a Target" and explained the process of becoming a target. At the end of his article, Hrant Dink wrote as follows: *Yes, I may feel like I have the spiritual unease of a pigeon, but I do know that people do not harm pigeons in this country. Pigeons lead their lives deep into the cities, among people. Yes, somewhat timid, but just as free.*

A week after this article, Hrant Dink killed on January 19, 2007, at the scene of an armed attack on the exit of Agos Newspaper on Halaskargazi Street. Turkey since 1909, 62

² Alev Er, Hrant'ın, kayıp Ermeni Yetimin Peşinde, Agos, January 12, 2007. Retrieved from: <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/12263/hrantin-kayip-ermeni-yetimin-pesinde>. Accessed April 15, 2020.

³ Şükran Pakkan, Neler Yapmadık Şu Vatan İçin, İstanbul, 2011, p.153.

⁴ Hrant Dink, Ermeni Kimliği Üzerine, Agos, February 13, 2004. Retrieved from: <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/17525/ermeni-kimligi-uzerine-8-ermenistanla-tanismak>. Accessed April 15, 2020.

⁵ Fethiye Çetin, Utanç Duyuyorum! Hrant Dink Cinayetinin Yargısı, Metis Kitap, İstanbul, 2013, p.47-53.

journalists were killed by assassination. Hrant Dink was one of them. Dink's assassination, the media impact of rising nationalism in Turkey and enlivened the debate. In his funeral, tens of thousands responded to the murder and shouted: "We are all Hrant Dink, we are all Armenians".⁶ Four empty cartridges were found near Hrant Dink's body, who died as a result of three bullets that hit his head and neck. Eyewitnesses said that the person who committed the murder was 18-19 years old, in jeans and a white beret. The murder suspect, Ogün Samast, was reported by his father and caught by the security forces. Samast admitted that he had committed the murder. A pistol was reportedly seized as a crime device on Samast.⁷ During the arrest, photographs were taken with the Turkish flag behind Ogün Samast. In the first statement of the 17-year-old murder suspect who was captured 36 hours after the murder, the following words were remarkable: I read the news on the Internet. I decided to kill Hrant Dink because he says Turkish blood is dirty.⁸ This statement alone, a person may decide in terms of what they have learned from the media and even murder to show the point where it was considered a proof of the rising nationalism in Turkey.

On the background of the murder, nationalism-centered ideologies were followed at every point. After the murder, it was revealed that almost everyone knows in Trabzon that Dink will be killed, and the police and gendarmerie have repeatedly reported.⁹

They took me away in the coup of September 12, 1980. I am a good Armenian and a good leftist. If this duo came side by side, you know what happens in this country. We were in the toilet in one of the soldiers' barracks morning and evening. They made cells in one of the toilets. They gathered some other Armenians. A soldier was coming in half an hour, knocking on the door and telling us to sing the National Anthem. Could you make me Turkish by singing the National Anthem there in the morning and evening? Or you speak to us in Turkish for 75 years. What has changed? What would change if eighty thousand Armenians stopped speaking Armenian and joined you?

Hrant Dink made this speech at a panel he attended on June 17, 2001 in Trabzon. 6.5 years after this speech, he was targeted by the bullets of a 17-year-old young man who was born in Trabzon in front of the Agos Newspaper. Hence my research question is: What

⁶ Maureen Freely, Why They Killed Hrant Dink, May 1, 2007, Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064220701334477>. Accessed April 16, 2020.

⁷ Yıldırım Türker, Bu Dava Hepimizin Davası, Radikal İki, Oktober 12, 2008, Retrieved from: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/bu-dava-hepimizin-davasi-902914/>. Accessed April 16, 2020.

⁸ Temel Demirer, Hrant'ın Katilleri, Peri Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, p.212-215.

⁹ Perihan Özcan, Dink Cinayetinde İhmaller Zinciri, Agos, No:651, September 19, 2008, p.19.

happened in the past 6.5 years, and Hrant Dink became a target for bullets? What is the effect of nationalism and media in this murder? In my research, I consider using the archive of Agos Newspaper as the first source. My other sources will be books and articles about Hrant Dink. I chose this topic because Turkey is a country quite problematic regarding minority rights. Festus Okey and Andrea Santoro are among those who have been killed dubiously in this country.

Nationalism and Media in the 2000s

In the 21st century, nationalist ideology has strengthened worldwide, expanding its ground, shaping national policies, and even become fanatical. Especially in the 2000s, Turkish nationalism strengthened due to the arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and the claims of the Armenian genocide. While nationalism in the West often acted with the instinct to preserve racial and religious discrimination, national and spiritual values, nationalism in Turkey had a positive value in practice and was perceived as a common feeling that everyone who loves their nation, homeland, state and flag is considered a nationalist.¹⁰ Nationalism, one of the dominant ideologies in the 2000s, preserved, strengthened, and became effective due to the media's political orientation power. As a result, the discrimination of "us" and "others" grew again and even more harshly in societies that became closed and lonely, rather than turning out with technological developments and globalization.¹¹

The first stop of Turkish nationalism was Islamic Pan-Islamism, then it evolved into multinational Ottomanism, Islamism and eventually the ideology of Turkish nationalism. In fact, Pan-Turkism, which was born as a reaction within the structure of the Ottoman Empire, consisting of various religious and nationalists, developed with the emergence of the idea of the nation. Over the years, nationalism has grown, involving right wing groups. The status quo Turkish nationalism has always had a problematic perspective with other nations due to its historical and geographical reasons. Turkish nationalism has never been positive against Armenians, Greeks, Serbs, and Kurds. nationalism in Turkey in general was seen as a positive element. But in the 2000s there was a wide variety of nationalism. These are Atatürk nationalism, Kemalist left nationalism, liberal nationalism, ethnic nationalism and

¹⁰ Cihan Uzunçayır, 2000 Sonrası Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Farklı Yüzleri: Bir Sınıflandırma Denemesi, 2013, p.204-209. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281112502_2000_Sonrasi_Turk_Milliyetciliginin_Farkli_Yuzleri_Bir_Siniflandirma_Denemesi. Accessed June 6, 2020.

¹¹ Erol Turan, Milliyetçilik Teorisinin Gelişimi ve Türk Milliyetçiliği, 2011, p.140-144. Retrieved from: <http://sosyoteknik.selcuk.edu.tr/sustad/article/download/13/11>. Accessed June 6, 2020.

conservative nationalism. For this reason, there was no single type of Turkish nationalism, and more than one trend of nationalism, which was reshaped and evaluated with various versions, was defined.

It is an undisputed fact that the media not only gives information but also creates a perception. After all, the news is a product, the result of a process of formation, not a phenomenon that directly arises from reality itself, it is produced by an industry. This is open to being shaped by the economic and bureaucratic nature of the industry and the relationship between the media and other industries. The most important of these relationships was the news industry's relationship with the government and other political organizations. From a broad perspective, it also carried the task of reflecting the superior values in the historical context.¹² Considering the relationship between nationalism and media concepts, it was revealed that "popular nationalism" came into play at this point because the continuity of the nation is largely possible by the individuals who make up the nation and continue to see themselves as a part of the nation. This reproduction process sometimes determined the boundaries of nationalism, sometimes the distinction between "we" and "them".¹³

The Process That Led Hrant Dink to Death

The process that made Hrant Dink a target is quite old. Hrant Dink was a constant target because of his writings on the Armenian issue during his journalism. But what made him a real target was the Sabiha Gökçen news he made in 2004. The article claimed that Sabiha Gökçen was of Armenian origin. The news did not cause any problems since it did not attract much attention at first, but as a result of the reply given by the General Staff to the news made by the Hürriyet Newspaper, the news became the agenda in the whole country.¹⁴ While these developments were happening, there was a doom in the media. Hrant Dink was mentioned in almost every column. Hürriyet Newspaper writer Emin Çölaşan stated in his article that Hrant Dink was slandering. In addition, reactions were received by the authors of well-known newspapers such as Milliyet and Cumhuriyet.¹⁵

¹² Ceren Sözeri, Türkiye'de Medya-İktidar İlişkileri Sorunlar ve Öneriler, 2015, p.24-26. Retrieved from: <http://platform24.org/Content/Uploads/Editor/T%C3%BCrkiye%E2%80%99de%20Medya-%C4%B0ktidar%20%C4%B0li%C5%9Fkileri-BASKI.pdf>. Accessed June 6, 2020.

¹³ Barış Çoban, Medyanın Milliyetçi Söylemi: Medya, Öteki ve Şiddet, 2016, p.1-4. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/660730/Medyan%C4%B1n_Milliyet%C3%A7i_S%C3%B6ylemi_Medya_%C3%96teki_ve_%C5%9Eiddet. Accessed June 6, 2020.

¹⁴ Adem Yavuz Arslan, Bir Devlet Cinayeti, Kafası karışıklar ve yeni başlayanlar için Hrant Dink cinayeti, 2019, p.21-30.

¹⁵ Pakkan, Neler Yapmadık Şu Vatan İçin, p.149-157.

The most important event that led Hrant Dink to death was the article "On the Armenian Identity" he wrote in 2004, making him a target again. In the article, Hrant was talking about the 1915 Armenian Genocide issue. The word "clean blood that will replace the poisonous blood that will be released from the Turk", which he used in the article, led him to death.¹⁶ This article made an unexpected effect. "Dink is the target of all our anger and hatred from now on," the President of the Istanbul Ülkü Ocakları said on February 26, 2004. Dink would also be prosecuted under article 301, which included insulting Turkishness. However, when the continuation of the article written by Hrant Dink was read, there was actually no insult to Turkishness, but there was a recommendation for the Armenian State. In the continuation of the Hrant article, diaspora Armenians can fill the identity gap, which will occur if they get rid of the Turkish obsession now embedded in their identity, with the existence of an independent Armenia that did not exist before. therefore, it would be more appropriate to deal with the Turks to develop their cultural ties with Armenia instead of trying to impose genocide on them and the world.

The article had created anger in the newspapers. An article titled "Hrant's Snarl" was written in Vatan Newspaper. In addition, Hrant Dink was targeted with an article titled "Look at the Armenian" in Yeniçağ Newspaper. National and central newspapers, on the other hand, seemed more balanced in terms of language, but were open to criticism in terms of the titles used and the details they emphasize. On the internet, the situation was more serious in ultra-nationalist and racist sites. Some websites have riveted the discourse of "Turkish enemy Armenians". There was not even an indirect language like daily newspapers, but a high-dose and direct criticism.¹⁷

Hrant Dink wrote an article on January 12, 2007, a week before his death, with the title "Why was I chosen as a target?".¹⁸ In the article, Dink, who defended himself, described the process he lived. He explained that it was not easy to live and that he was thinking of leaving the country with his family and going away. He explained that he was not afraid of

¹⁶ Arslan, Bir Devlet Cinayeti, p.100-102.

¹⁷ Zeynep Burcu Vardal, Nefret Söylemi ve Yeni Medya, 2016, p.136-140. Retrieved from: <http://static.dergipark.org.tr/article-download/imported/1099000026/1099000020.pdf?>. Accessed June 7, 2020.

¹⁸ Hrant Dink, Why was I chosen as a target?, Retrieved from: <https://hrantdink.org/en/hrant-dink/hrant-dink-articles/728-why-was-i-chosen-as-a-target>. Accessed June 7, 2020.

death, but was always helpless when threats got into his family. Hrant ended his writing with the part he was anxious about like a pigeon.

Assassination

A week after this article, Dink died on the scene of an armed attack on January 19, 2007, when he left Agos Newspaper on Halaskargazi Street. Dink has been the 62th journalist in Turkey to have been assassinated since 1909. 4 empty cartridges were found next to the body of Dink, who died as a result of three bullets hitting his head and neck. Eyewitnesses said the person who committed the murder was 18-19 years old, in jeans and a white beret. The murder suspect, Ogün Samast, was reported by his father on the security camera images broadcast on television and was caught by the security forces.¹⁹ During the arrest, photos of the Turkish flag hanging behind Samast and Atatürk's words "The soil of the homeland is sacred, it cannot be abandoned to its fate" were taken. An investigation has been launched into this image, but the report states that the photo does not constitute any crime. The 17-year-old murder suspect, who was captured 36 hours after the murder, said in his first statement that he had seen a news about Hrant Dink saying he was dirty for Turkish blood and decided to kill him. This statement alone showed that a person can decide on murder even with what he learned from the media, the point at which rising nationalism in Turkey has come. On the background of the murder, the traces of nationalism-centered ideologies were seen at every point. The evidence emerged after the murder revealed that almost everyone living in Trabzon knows that Dink will be killed, and that police and gendarmerie have been reported several times.²⁰ The clues of fanatic nationalism were not just statements of Samast. 66 people were detained immediately after the murder, but 47 were released. The trigger of the gun that killed Hrant Dink was Ogün Samast, but Yasin Hayal and Erhan Tuncel were the ones who made him commit murder.

The Relationship Between Assassination and Nationalism

Due to the rising tendency to violence, the most terrible paintings occurred on the street. As a result of racist rhetoric that lasted for years, gangs formed on the streets between them. Along with the television series that fueled the nationalist sensibilities, the far-right organizations that blinded their empowerment declared secretly that the difference was the

¹⁹ Çetin, Utanç Duyuyorum!, p.228-230.

²⁰ Murat Sevinç, Hrant Dink Cinayetinin Düşündürdükleri, p.300-303. Retrieved from: <http://static.dergipark.org.tr/article-download/imported/5000092950/5000086430.pdf?> Accessed June 8, 2020.

enemy.²¹ Turkey went through a crisis of confidence after the murder. The security forces allegedly covered up the murder even though they knew it beforehand. Although many people have been dismissed, effective evidence has not been reached in the case but has stepped into a process that needs serious questioning in terms of Turkey's deep balances.

One of the most important effects of the Dink murder was that everyone who had strengthened fanatic nationalism was noticed. The conservative point of view did not see nationalism as a harmful point of view, but it was accepted that the fanatic point of view caused violence in one segment and started to widen in many groups. As a result, Turkey was giving a democracy test during the Dink murder and subsequent litigation process. After Dink's murder, racist, ethnic and ultra-nationalism were charged. While some argued that true nationalism was a good thing, some blamed nationalism.

Conclusion

As a result, Hrant Dink was an Armenian, a "legitimate" target for popular nationalism. The killing of Dink, who insulted Turkishness, might have been seen as an appropriate means to ossify the popular nationalist front. It was even said that because he was an Armenian, he might even have thought that his ownership would be low. But what was not calculated was that the killing of Dink also contributed to efforts to recognize the Armenian genocide around the world. The nationalist discourse that emerged after Dink's massacre gave two different emphases. First, the Dink murder had to be condemned, but the fact of provocation should not be forgotten. Secondly, developments such as the European Union process, upside down identity discussions, objections to article 301 have brought about this murder. In both cases, the murder was based on "just causes". The Hrant Dink assassination has not taught us anything from Anatolian civilizations that we have been living for a thousand years. The incident we experienced on the day of the assassination is not just a humble attack. The bullets squeezed into Hrant Dink that day were bored with the honor and pride of this country. Extreme nationalism, which cannot be bridged in the country, has threatened all minorities in the country. The Hrant Dink assassination was a planned murder, but it was neither the first nor the last murder of the rising racism in the country.

²¹ Şükran Pakkan, Türk Yazılı Basınında Milliyetçilik Olgusu ve Hrant Dink Cinayeti Sürecinde Yazılı Basının Tutumu, 2008, p.80-85. Retrieved from: <http://nek.istanbul.edu.tr:4444/ekos/TEZ/43644.pdf>. Accessed June 8, 2020.

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